



The New Town Crier

Official Newsletter of the Historical Society of Bloomfield



BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07003

SEPTEMBER 2006

MEETING

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26
8:00 PM
at the
BLOOMFIELD CIVIC CENTER
84 Broad Street, Bloomfield

Philip Lester *Musical journey through American history.*

After a summer hiatus, the Historical Society of Bloomfield will resume its membership meetings September 26th at 8PM at the civic Center, 84 Broad Street. There will be a business meeting followed by American Treasures, a Musical Journey through American history given by Philip Lester on the classical guitar, accompanied by anecdotal material.

Mr. Lester's repertoire includes frontier ballads, spirituals, sea shanty songs, and Stephen Foster melodies. The musical arrangements are his own.

Lester, a Bloomfield resident, has performed at many local historical societies and libraries for audiences of all ages. His AMERICAN TREASURES recording was released in 2001.



THE LINDNER HOME



This stately residence in Colonial Revival style, was built by Frank Lindner (1845-1923) around 1905, when, because of the health of his only daughter, Emilie, he moved his family from Weehawken to Bloomfield. The photograph may have been taken around 1920. Named for the former owner of the property, Willard Richards, the remainder of the new street was occupied by smaller houses, and the Lindner home is now a multiple dwelling.



Emilie Lindner Westerdahl

After the death of Frank Lindner in 1923, Emilie and her mother, Pauline, moved to a more modest home on Ashland Avenue, remaining there until the marriage of Emilie to Axel Westerdahl in the 1930's. Pauline Suess Lindner lived with her daughter and son-in-law in their home at 57 Woodland Road until her own death in 1940.

Emilie Lindner Westerdahl continued to live on Woodland Road after the death of her husband in 1965. She was active in the Girl Scout organization and pursued her hobby of photogra-

Continued on page 2

LOST LANDSCAPE

A photo taken by Emilie Lindner Westerdahl of the Herman farm, possibly from her back yard on Woodland Road, with tree-covered "Crow Hill" in the background. It is just after a winter ice-storm has covered everything with a glaze that must have sparkled like crystal in the morning sunlight. Davey's Lane, on its way from Belleville Avenue to the old abandoned trunk board mill, crosses from left to right and disappears over the hill. The entire area was covered with tacky garden apartments around 1947.



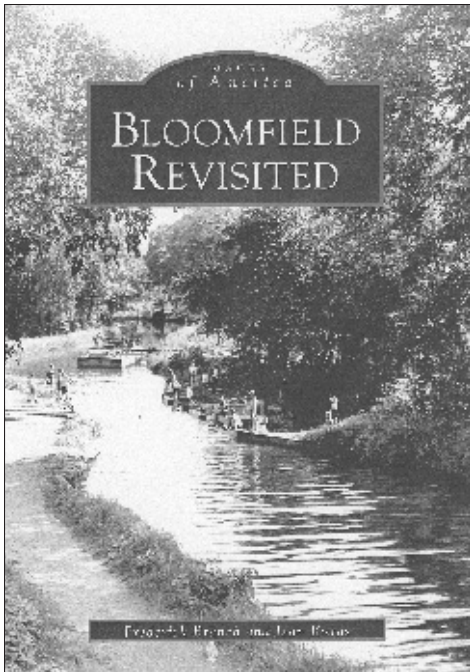


PHOTO ON COVER: Morris Canal looking south from Montgomery Street Bridge; early 1900's. In the distance can be seen Newark Avenue and the sharp 90-degree eastward turn made by the canal toward Belleville and Newark. The structure the kids are standing on is the aqueduct over the Second River.

HOT OFF THE PRESS!

A collaboration of Jean Kuras and Frederick Branch has brought *Bloomfield Revisited* to life! Vintage photographs and much research combine to continue the celebration of the history of our town. This second book offers a panorama of people, neighborhoods, commercial activity, and events. Shown are the war years, the development of the Garden State Parkway, and changing neighborhoods. Here are images of artists, achievers, patriots, heroes, government, families and friends, in a kaleidoscopic view of the swiftly changing scenes of an American Town.

Arcadia Publishing announced the availability of the book by late August. It will be sold by the Historical Society at its September Meeting, and sold thereafter in the Museum. The book is also on the shelves of bookstores, including Barnes and Noble and Borders.

Morris Canal: Still Remembered

Canal buffs in this area will have a treat on Friday evening, October 6 at 7PM, when there will be an Audio-Visual program at Lambert Castle, 3 Valley Road, Paterson. Separate projectors and screens will be used to compare scenes on the canal in the early 1900's with the same scenes as they appear today. "In Search of The Morris Canal" will follow the route of the canal from the Delaware River at Phillipsburg to the canal's basin on the Hudson River at Jersey City. Your editor hopes to see you there.

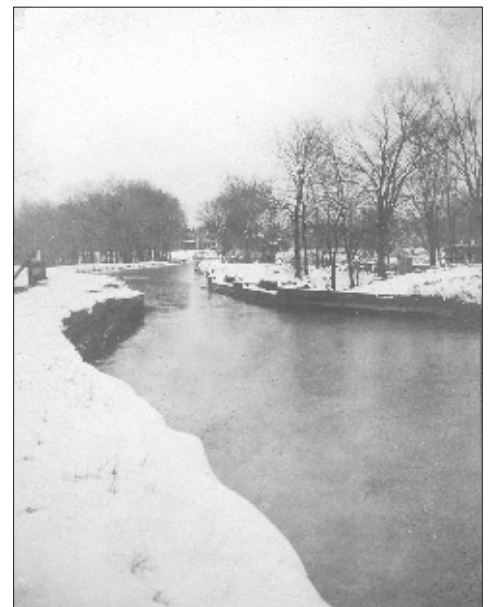
Although hardly a trace of this once important waterway remains in Bloomfield, it is still enthusiastically remembered by many people who never saw it in operation. The incline planes of the canal, parts of which were made at the Morris Mill here in Bloomfield, were still considered to be marvels of engineering more than 50 years after they were built (Bloomfield had one at James Street). An engraving of that plane was published on the cover of "Scientific American" for May 21, 1882.

Made obsolete by the construction of railroads, the canal was abandoned and drained in 1924 by an act of the New Jersey Legislature and the bridges, locks, and planes were speedily destroyed. Further, in the early 1950's, most of the dry bed and towpath in Bloomfield were obliterated by the Garden State Parkway. The one remaining stretch of the 102-mile facility, (which zig-zagged all over northern New Jersey in search of the most level land available), can be traced from Montgomery Street to the soon-to-be-replaced double bridge that carries Berkeley Avenue over the Second River and canal bed.

Back in the 1930's, when the editor was growing up here in town, the towpath was still in use, both as a bridle path for the several riding stables that rented horses to anyone who was still able to ride, and to us pedestrians who used it as short cuts from Belleville Avenue to Beach, Liberty and Montgomery, where there were the remains of the boat basin, the old lock-keepers house, a stable with horses for hire, and

flocks of chickens wandering all over the place. Try to imagine that in present day Bloomfield!

N.B. A series of photos of the canal in those days can be found in the first Arcadia "Bloomfield Book" on pages 54 and 55.



An early photo from the towpath by Bloomfield artist Charles Warren Eaton shows almost the same scene as the cover of "Bloomfield Revisited" except that the cold blasts of winter have stopped traffic on the canal until the following March. The bed of the Second River was at a much higher level until the walls on either side were constructed in the early 20th century and the troublesome stream dropped about ten feet. Before then, the canal aqueduct was a troublesome obstacle to floodwaters, which used to back up as far as The Center and cause considerable property damage.

The Lindner Home (continued on page 1)

phy. Most of the prints in her album, (now preserved in the Museum of the Historical Society of Bloomfield) are the usual subjects of amateur photographers: Mount Vernon, covered bridges, and so on, but three of them are unique (in the best sense of that much overworked word) because they are scenes of Bloomfield that, as far as is known, were not considered important enough to photograph by anyone else. One of these is published on page 2.

The beautiful plantings around the Soldiers and Sailors Monument and the Historic District Marker are the work of Mary Shoffner and Jean Kuras of the Historical Society.

Each spring, in time for the Memorial Day celebration, and armed with shovels, rakes, and pots of geraniums and begonias, Mary and Jean head for the Center to beatify these two locations of special interest. The appreciative response of those walking and driving by make their hard work seem worthwhile.



HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM OPENING ON MAY 4, 1969



Looking like a couple of characters from a Dickens novel, or possibly clothing store dummies from The Museum, two members of the newly formed Historical Society of Bloomfield pose in the Bloomfield Public Library theatre, where the inauguration ceremonies have just taken place, presided over by the late Mary Ann Dorn. They are identified as the late Kenneth McCormick on the left and Frederick Branch on the right.



A photograph of the HSOB Museum, taken on the same date, shows the room looking considerably less crowded than the one we know today: more than a thousand objects have since been added to the collection.

The original Curator, and the many since then (Sallie Black, Margaret Riggin, Lucy Sant Ambrogio and now Dorothy Johnson) have carefully cataloged and indexed the many photographs, books, letters, paintings, china, furniture, and other historical memorabilia that comprise the collection. These disparate objects have been given accession numbers and carefully filed in closets, cabinets, and on racks so that they can be found when needed.

Some of the earliest acquisitions in the Museum are shown in this 1969 photograph. The large spinning reel (not wheel) in the corner was given to the 1936 Historical Committee for the so-called "Attic Museum" that had been established to celebrate the sesquicentennial of the Church on the Green. The late Colonel Joseph Davis Sears, the donor of this Davis family heirloom, said that it had been used in the old homestead on Franklin Street opposite the Baptist Church "for about 200 years". Colonel Sears also gave the classical style mantelpiece, removed from the Caleb Davis house when it was remodeled into a Manse for the Church on the Green.

The "Attic Museum" was housed on the third floor of the 1925 Library Building and was opened to the public and to school children through the 1930's until interest gradually waned. Then the small collection of ancient artifacts was removed to a storage area under the eaves and the space taken over during World War Two by The Bloomfield Art League, which used it for painting sessions and meetings.

Other articles in the photo, most of them still on display today, are an oil painting by Charles Vernon Ward, an talented member of that distinguished Bloomfield family, a 19th century rosewood side table, kerosene lamp, 18th century child's chair, and a rush-bottom chair that was said to have been found in the Stubbert house during demolition. The house had been originally built in the early 1800's by Doctor Ira Dodd and was demolished around 1912 as a site for the Senior High School building.



Ira Dodd Home, 1856



MYSTERY BRIDGE

Evidence of the existence of a road from Davey's Lane westward to an unknown destination and serving an unknown purpose is shown here in a photograph of 1947. Remains survived of a poured concrete pier and one abutment of a vanished wooden bridge. A gravel-surfaced road led off to the right toward the existing lane from Belleville Avenue to the Davey Company. The other end of the bridge would have rested on a similar pier to the left. The Third River flows in the foreground toward the site of the dam that created the millpond more than a century before. These remains of a forgotten road and bridge, which now are buried beneath the Garden State Parkway toll plaza, have yet to be found on any of the old maps in the Historical Society's archive.



General Joseph Bloomfield

THE NEW TOWN CRIER
THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
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OF BLOOMFIELD
90 Broad Street
Bloomfield, NJ 07003

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BACK COPIES AVAILABLE

Previous issues of this publication can be had by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to the editor at 28 Forest Drive, Bloomfield or the HSOB Museum at 90 Broad Street, Bloomfield. Two different copies will be sent for each envelope received.

How To Join The HSOB

The Society welcomes anyone who has an interest in local history and who want to know more about it. Moreover, anyone below the legal voting age who wants to contribute to this newsletter is more than welcome to submit a manuscript to this Newsletter. Our address is: Historical Society of Bloomfield Museum, c/o Bloomfield Public Library, 90 Broad St., Bloomfield 07003.

E-MAIL THE HISTORICAL
SOCIETY OF BLOOMFIELD AT:
BloomfHist@aol.com
OR CALL US AT: **973-743-8844**



HALCYON PARK ENCORE

A card postmarked 1916 (not necessarily the date of the original photo, but certainly later) that was taken from almost exactly the same spot where Mr. and Mrs. Friend were photographed in 1910 (see May Newsletter). A close look at the lower right corner reveals the stump of that battered old tree that appeared in the photo of ten years before. We can also see that there are many new houses in The Park, although the building boom of 1920-29 has not yet resulted in their being crowded so closely

LETTERS TO THE HSOB

September 8, 2006

Dear Peter,

Your visit here a few weeks ago is still fresh in my memory and I had intended to write and thank you for the luncheon at Charlie Brown's. It was a good time and I really enjoyed meeting you and reminiscing about the GOD in Bloomfield. ("Good Old Days")

The Board of Trustees has agreed with my suggestion that, in appreciation of your generous donation, we could send a copy of the new book as soon as it is available. Well, here it is, as a small token of our gratitude.

Sincerely,

Fred

Here is the excerpt I'd like to print:

July 21, 2006

Dear Fred,

...I have greatly enjoyed the newsletters and book and they opened a flood of old memories. When I came along my parents lived in a two family [house] on Franklin Ave. just down from Berkeley. My father then rented a home on Beardsley Ave. and I attended Berkeley School, trudging back and forth. Beardsley Ave. afforded great play venues for kids – R.R. tracks, open fields and the chance to throw rocks at the kids from Floyd Avenue. Just as I was passing into the new Junior High, we rented a house in Halcyon Park – your May Newsletter has a 1906 map – it shows two ponds which confuses me a bit – I think we lived on "Parkway" and I note East and West around this smaller pond. We lived just about where that pond was. We sledded down Vesper Place from Berkeley over the curb onto the larger pond. As I was finishing Junior High, my father bought a house – \$7,500. I remember at 217 Berkley. With my grandparents on Willard Avenue, everything was close by. ...

Regards,

Peter F. Wright

West Granby, Connecticut